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SUBJECT: SC DEBATES WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: SEXUAL VIOLENCE
REPORT

REF: STATE 81321

¶1. Summary: The members of the Security Council, plus over two dozen other delegations, discussed the Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in armed conflict (SCR 1820) August 7, condemning such crimes and urging continued international attention to this issue. Ambassador Rice began the discussion with a strong statement urging prompt action (reftel). Although only a few SC members fully endorsed establishment of a Commission of Inquiry, almost all acknowledged the need for measures to address impunity. Most speakers called for an annual report, consideration of targeted sanctions, more participation of women in peace processes, and better information sharing. Many speakers referred to newly-adopted SCR 1882, which expanded the scope of the SC working group on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) to report on sexual violence. Several acknowledged the steps taken in DRC to deal with the five high-ranking military officers accused of sexual violence. Some speakers supported the appointment of a high-level representative of the SG. Russia asked that killing, maiming and other violations against civilians be given equal weight. China urged caution in using targeted sanctions in relation to sexual violence. USUN next steps are to work with like-minded SC delegations on a draft resolution following up on the SYG's report, followed by informal consultations with all Council members, leading to adoption of a resolution during the first week of September. End summary.

Combating Impunity

¶2. (U) All speakers acknowledged that women and children are the first victims of armed conflict, and that perpetrators of sexual violence should not enjoy impunity for their crimes. The SG's recommendation of immediate establishment of a Commission of Inquiry (CoI) for DRC, Chad and Sudan, however, elicited more questions than endorsements. France asked why the CoI would be limited to only three countries, while Russia questioned why it would only look into sexual violence. Austria, Japan, and Croatia expressed interest in looking into the recommendation to see if it would be feasible. Mexico and Libya favored the SG's recommendation for a CoI. China suggested the SG contact the three governments involved to seek their consent for a CoI. Burkina Faso, Vietnam and China noted the responsibility of governments to protect their women and civilians, and the need for international assistance with capacity building. Of the non-Council members, Norway, Israel, Australia and Italy endorsed a CoI. All other speakers were non-committal on a CoI, but wanted better mechanisms to improve accountability and the justice sector.

¶3. (U) France referred to actions within the DRC to begin to bring to justice the five high-ranking military officers discussed earlier in the SC, as a step in the right direction. Austria, Japan, Mexico and others mentioned the possibility of bringing cases to the ICC; Sierra Leone and Belgium underlined the contribution of the Special

Court in Sierra Leone; Croatia, Nigeria and others stressed the role of the International Criminal Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY and ICTR). Uganda pointed to the need for vetting of any new, combined armed forces to exclude sexual predators and many delegations urged improvements in rule of law and the domestic justice system. Uganda, Burkina Faso, Afghanistan, China and Vietnam pointed to the underlying problem of discriminatory cultural attitudes towards women as fostering an attitude of impunity.

High Level Secretariat Official

¶4. (U) The SYG, in his introductory remarks, noted that the General Assembly was working on creation of a new UN institution to deal with women's equality and human rights, and that he was considering appointment of a senior system-wide official to deal with sexual violence, similar to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on CAAC. The U.S. and others recognized the need for more stronger, better coordinated UN leadership on the issues of sexual violence. Ambassador Rice, in her statement (ref a) endorsed appointment of an SRSG with a time-limited mandate. Others favoring a high-level appointment included France, Austria, Japan, Burkina Faso, Sweden (on behalf of the EU), Norway, Australia, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium and Timor Leste. Mexico voiced doubts whether such an appointment would be the system's best response, since they saw the need for coordination to be greater on the ground, rather than at headquarters. Turkey, Vietnam and Mexico cautioned against duplication of efforts and urged care in creating new institutions.

Sanctions Committees

¶5. (U) China was isolated in cautioning against using the Sanctions Committees to deal with sexual violence perpetrators. Russia and some others sidestepped any mention the SYG's recommendation on sanctions. Others, such as Mexico and Austria, urged the exchange of information between the Sanctions Committees and other parts of the UN system, including the CAAC working group. France and the U.S. came out strongest in favor of incorporating sexual crimes as a basis for sanctions when appropriate.

Concern for Local Women

¶6. (U) The need for coordination within the UN system came up repeatedly, with a number of delegations mentioning "data collection." (Comment: This can probably be explained by widespread lobbying done by concerned NGOs prior to the debate, and their emphasis on the need for enhanced data collection. End comment.) Many stressed the importance of victim assistance, and delegations called almost universally for more participation of women in peace processes and post-conflict peace-building efforts. Libya managed to inject Palestinian women into the debate by claiming that all human rights violations against women, such as access to hospitals and harassment in prison, should be included in the SG's report, not just sexual violence.

Next Steps

¶7. (U) The president of the SC, UK PermRep Sawers, ended by saying the SC would prepare a formal response to the SG's report in coming weeks. (Comment: USUN hopes to be in a position to adopt a resolution by September 3. Although the Russians have expressed to USUN Missoff a preference for a Presidential Statement (PRST), many other SC members have displayed a willingness to work towards a resolution within the projected timeframe. End comment.)

Rice